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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD

Joint written statement submitted by World Confederation of Labour, World Federation of Trade Unions, non-governmental organizations in general consultative status; Association of American Jurists, Indian Movement "Tupaj Amaru", Inter African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children, International Association for the Defence of Religious Liberty, International Association of Democratic Lawyers, International Federation of ACAT (Action of Christians for the Abolition of Torture), International Law Association, International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples, North South XXI, Pax Romana, War Resisters' International, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, World Organization against Torture, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status; European Union of Public Relations, International Baccalaureate Organization, International Educational Development, Inc., International Peace Bureau, International Institute for Peace, Movement against Racism and for Friendship among Peoples, United Nations Association of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, World Christian Life Community, non-governmental organizations on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[12 April 1999]

Statement on Iran

1. Continuing human rights violations in Iran have been a matter of grave concern. In late 1998, a number of writers and dissidents who had been tolerated for two decades by the authorities mysteriously disappeared or were murdered. The leaders tried to blame the opponents of the regime and foreign enemies for these murders. Under public pressure, however, the Ministry of Intelligence admitted to these murders. In its report in February 1999, a well-known human rights organization wrote: "It appears that in recent months we have been witnessing a serious deterioration of fundamental freedoms in Iran."

2. In reference to recent killing this report states: "Even though establishing responsibilities is rather difficult in Iran due to conflicts among those who control power, there is no doubt that the Iranian authorities are clearly implicated in the resumption of suppression, particularly the murder of intellectuals in recent months."

3. Although several months have passed since the murders, the identities of the perpetrators have not yet been disclosed, nor have they been prosecuted. Instead, the officials of the Government of Iran, including its President, praised the personnel of the Ministry of Intelligence for their activities.

4. In his interim report to the General Assembly, the Special Representative of the Commission on Human Rights on the Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran noted that "executions seemed to continue at a faily high level" (see para. 63 of the Special Representative's report to the Commission (E/CN.4/1999/32)).

5. In contrast to expectations among some in the world community, since Khatami has become President, there have been more than 340 executions. In the meantime, nine individuals were sentenced to stoning. Khatami's Government spokesman stated that stoning should be carried out before a small crowd so that it would not be made public abroad. Torture and other cruel punishments are widely practised in Iran. At least 28 Iranian dissidents have been assassinated abroad in the past 22 months during Khatami's presidency.

6. Popular protests are brutually suppressed. On 22 February 1999, in a peaceful demonstration in the city of Sanandaj (in Iranian Kurdistan, in the west of Iran), 20 were killed, many more wounded and 2,000 arrested, when the revolutionary guards attacked protesters. The State-run media confirmed the killing of "a number of citizens of the Islamic Republic by security forces". On 17 February, in villages around Babol in the northern Mazandaran province, the guards attacked and crushed a peaceful demonstration. Two children were killed.

7. In 1998, the situation of women has deteriorated. Ratification of a bill segregating medical and health care has increased pressure on women. In the meantime, another restrictive bill considered defending equal rights for women and men in the media as a crime. In addition, beating and intimidating women on the streets for mal-veiling still goes on and the Government has adopted no practical measure to stop this.

8. Religious minorities continue to be suppressed in Iran. After a six-year lull, the execution of Baha'is resumed last summer and this is yet another indication of the deteriorating human rights situation in Iran.

9. A list of 3,200 Mojahedin who were among the victims in the massacre of 30,000 political prisoners in 1988 was recently released by the Mojahedin Organization. Among them, there were hundreds of women, who were executed after suffering several years of torture in the prisons for simply standing firm in their beliefs. A number of perpetrators of these executions are now in Khatami's Government or act as advisers or deputies to him.

10. All indications in Iran point to the fact that the human rights situation in Iran has deteriorated. A distinctive feature of this suppression is that it has been institutionalized. Implementing the law in Iran is, therefore, equal to human rights violations. A well-known human rights organization reported: "The foundations of the regime in Iran have made the human rights violations become a natural product of the judicial and political establishment of the country".

11. There are no political parties and forums independent from ruling factions in Iran. People play no part in determining their own future. In his latest report, the Special Representative referred to "increased pressure on the press", and stated that a number of journals had been banned or suspended for offences such as "insulting the late Ayatollah Khomeini" (E/CN.4/1999/32, para. 13).

12. The Government of Iran still refrains from any cooperation with judicial authorities in different countries to implement justice with regard to the murderers of dissidents abroad, including the murderers of Dr. Kazem Rajavi in Geneva, Mohammad Hossein Naghdi in Rome and Zahra Rajabi in Istanbul, all well-known Iranian resistance activists in the field of human rights.

13. In recent months, majorities in the Parliaments of the United Kingdom, Italy, Luxembourg and Belgium, and the United States Congress declared in their statements that there had been no improvement in the human rights situation in Iran and that executions and suppression were continuing under Khatami. A new wave of arrests of former political prisoners by security organs of the regime and an increase in political executions, including those of 18 sympathizers of the Mojahedin in March 1999, have been a cause for grave concern.

14. In the light of numerous cases of human rights abuses in Iran, it is necessary for the Commission on Human Rights to adopt a firm and substantive resolution condemning the human rights violations in Iran unconditionally. Experience had shown that any concession to the mullahs only leads to deterioration of human rights in Iran. Judgement of the regime should be based on Khatami's deeds in the past two years and not just on his words.

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